

painfully aware of our Government's neglect of our transportation infrastructure over the last several years.

Potholes and traffic jams can take a toll on your car and your pocketbook. A 2006 survey showed that driving on rough roads is costing the average urban motorist about \$383 a year in added vehicle maintenance costs. With gas inching back toward \$3 a gallon, that is an added strain on a family's budget.

Beyond this economic strain, though, failing and deteriorating infrastructure can lead to tragic consequences. Roadway conditions are a significant factor in approximately one-third of traffic fatalities.

The August 1 collapse of I-35W in Minneapolis was among the most tragic examples of this danger. Thirteen people died, and around 100 were injured, when the eight-lane truss bridge collapsed into the Mississippi River.

The Minneapolis disaster has engineers and planners around the country taking a second look at the condition of their bridges. And what they are finding is troubling.

In Colorado, nearly 7 percent of our bridges are structurally deficient and need immediate attention. 110 bridges that belong to the State need full replacement. Another 375 need rehabilitation. Unfortunately, the backlog of bridgework that needs to be done in our State is an overwhelming \$758 million. In Colorado and across the country, we desperately need more resources to get this work done. I believe the Senate made a wise investment when it voted overwhelmingly in support of Senator MURRAY's amendment to add \$1 billion in dedicated funding for the Federal Highway Administration's bridge replacement and rehabilitation program.

We also must recommit ourselves to investing in our roads and highways. They are the veins of commerce that sustain our economy. Our ability to move goods and people quickly and safely is absolutely fundamental to continued growth.

The American people, and the people of Colorado, understand this. When I visit a town like Gunnison, maintenance and improvements to Highway 50, which links Pueblo and the Front Range with Gunnison and the Western Slope, is at the top of the list for local elected officials. When I visit Eagle County, Clear Creek County, and Summit County, I-70 investments are front and center. And when I meet with officials in Lamar, Springfield, and Eads, maintenance of Highway 287, part of the "Ports to Plains" corridor, is the topic of conversation.

For each of these communities, good roads are essential for economic vitality. Across the political spectrum, across a broad range of interests and professions, Coloradans understand this. Two years ago, we voted to allow the state government to retain an additional \$5.7 billion in revenues over 5 years to help fund our schools and our

roads. The statewide referendum passed comfortably because the Colorado business community knows that failing infrastructure is a drag on an economy. Smart investments in bridges, roads, and airports yield strong returns over the long term.

The bill we passed earlier today makes these needed investments in our Nation's transportation infrastructure. It allocates \$65.7 billion to transportation, including \$40.2 billion for highway construction.

This will allow for us to move ahead with several vital projects in Colorado.

Notably, the bill includes \$5 million for continued construction of a new interchange near Gate 20 at Fort Carson. The Mountain Post is accommodating two additional brigades and is growing by approximately 12,000 troops over the next 2 years. Gate 20 allows soldiers and contractors to enter the base from Fountain, Pueblo, and points south of the base. The base commander, General Nixon, sees this as a top priority and we help him fulfill it with this bill.

Additionally, the bill provides \$2 million for work on the Ports to Plains Highway, U.S. 287, near Lamar. This builds on the over \$11 million we have invested in his project over the past 3 years to build the capacity of this major north-south commercial artery. I have driven that road many times over the past few years, and it is improving steadily. You see more trucks on that road now, and you see more goods moving to market more quickly.

In southern Colorado, we have included funding to restore a road leading to one of our newest national parks, Great Sand Dunes, in my native San Luis Valley. 300,000 visitors a year come to Great Sand Dunes. It is a boon to the local economy, and the \$3 million for resurfacing State Highway 150 to the Sand Dunes will help more Americans see this treasure of the American West.

But the transportation portion of this bill does not simply fund new roads. It also includes forward-thinking investments in mass transit solutions to reduce the wear and tear on our highways, to save gas, and to unclog traffic jams. This bill includes \$70 million for the Denver Regional Transportation District's West Corridor Light Rail Project and \$70 million for RTD's Southeast Corridor Multimodal Project. Coloradans know it as T-Rex. It blends light rail and highway improvements in one of the largest mass transit projects that is underway in the United States. It is changing how people commute and where they are choosing to live. This bill keeps Denver's transportation revolution on track.

Finally, I would also like to express my strong support for the funding this legislation makes available for the community development block grant program. I have heard from public officials across Colorado, and they all tell me that the CDBG program is one of

the most effective Federal Government programs available to cities, towns, and rural communities in our State, and across the Nation.

Last year, Colorado alone received nearly \$40 million from the CDBG program, with several towns and cities receiving in excess of \$1.5 million apiece. While the President's budget would have cut this funding by 20 percent, the underlying legislation restores those cuts and provides \$3.77 billion for the program. We should not be slashing funding for one of our most effective and efficient tools for energizing communities and improving housing infrastructure. This bill does the right thing and restores this program.

I am proud of the bill that we passed—it sets the right priorities and makes smart investments in our transportation infrastructure and in our communities. I want to again thank Chairman MURRAY, Ranking Member BOND, the Appropriations Committee, and their staffs for their work on this bill. I hope it is signed into law.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period for the transaction of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. WHITEHOUSE.) Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. MURRAY. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, is the Senate in morning business?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We are in morning business.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask to speak—it will not be for a very long time but longer than the usual 10 minutes allotted.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Iowa is recognized.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I thank the Chair.

(The remarks of Mr. GRASSLEY pertaining to the introduction of S. 2041 are printed in today's RECORD under "Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.")

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

DRUG SAFETY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I wish to speak for a short period of time on another issue that I have been working on.

Yesterday, the Journal of the American Medical Association published a study on the diabetes drug Avandia. This study concluded Avandia significantly increases the risk of heart attacks, a subject that Senator BAUCUS and I have been investigating for some months. You will remember that it was back in May that a study in the New England Journal of Medicine first alerted the public of an increased risk of heart attacks from Avandia.

When that study was published, Senator BAUCUS, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and I raised concerns that the drugmaker had sought to silence a critic who voiced apprehension about Avandia back in 1999. Remember, this is 8 years ago. At the time, SmithKline Beecham manufactured Avandia. The company later merged with Glaxo Wellcome to form today's GlaxoSmithKline.

According to the Wall Street Journal, GlaxoSmithKline said the allegations that the company silenced critics of Avandia were "absolutely false."

Today I would like to discuss some internal company communications that suggest otherwise. The person who first blew the whistle about cardiovascular problems with Avandia was Dr. John Buse. He was a professor at the University of North Carolina.

Shortly after Avandia came on the market, back in 1999, Dr. Buse began warning his colleagues at medical meetings that the drug might be dangerous.

How did this company respond when this professor brought up these issues? In an e-mail dated June 25, 1999, two company executives discussed ways to silence Dr. Buse. I would like to read parts of the e-mail. One executive wrote of a plan to "write him a firm letter that would warn him about doing this again . . . with the punishment being that we will complain up his academic line and to the CME granting bodies that accredit his activities."

CME stands for continuing medical education. I will come back to that in just a second.

In response, another company executive e-mailed back, proposing to sue Dr. Buse and launched a media offensive promoting Avandia.

Based on this e-mail exchange, it seems to me that at least two drug company officials did attempt to silence a critic. In fact, Dr. Buse stopped making any critical statements about Avandia shortly after this e-mail exchange. Scientists should be able to raise issues related to public health and safety in a free and uncensored manner, not the way they do things in China. And when these scientists are suppressed, we ought to consider that a very serious problem. The reason why is because the scientific process will

take care of itself. If scientist Grassley has a suggestion and you think it is crazy, you are a scientist, my work can be reviewed by you and it has to stand the test of peer review. So I think it is a very good process, and if we just let it go on, it will show whether this scientist or that scientist is right or wrong.

The scientific process, if suppressed, I say, is a very serious problem. But more important in this whole process, the American public loses. Instead of Avandia being more critically examined for safety, it was heavily marketed and became what experts have called the best selling diabetes drug in America. It has been reported to me that this huge volume of sales may have resulted in 60,000 to 100,000 heart attacks from 1999 until the year 2006—that is about 20 a day—from the users of Avandia.

What happened to the company executives who sought to attack Dr. Buse for voicing his scientific opinion? Based on the information I have received to date, nothing has happened to these corporate executives.

Let me return to the issue of continuing medical education. In the e-mail exchange I quoted, the two company officials discussed complaining about Dr. Buse to the accrediting bodies of continuing medical education. Every year, medical professionals must get continuing medical education credits to stay current in their profession. The continuing medical education companies and the doctors who teach the classes are supposed to be independent of drug companies that fund the courses. But I think we now know what we have often suspected: Continuing medical education courses often are not independent at all. In fact, the drug companies have a lot to say about what goes on in these courses and who gets paid to teach them.

In April, the Finance Committee staff released a report on pharmaceutical company support of continuing medical education. Drug companies pour about \$1 billion every year into continuing medical education, and the report noted that some educational courses have become veiled forms of advertising.

Of course, this also ties in to last week's introduction of the bill I submitted called the Physicians Payments Sunshine Act. I introduced that bill with Senator KOHL, who is chairman of the Aging Committee, because Americans have a right to know how the drug companies are using money to try to shape the medical field. The bill requires drug and device companies to report payments and other gifts they give to doctors, bringing a little transparency to the practice of companies such as GlaxoSmithKline. I hope to see more of my colleagues sign on to this legislation. I cannot spotlight every instance where a drug company goes after an independent scientist with a stick, as they did with Dr. Buse, but to-

gether we can splash some sunlight on the financial carrots drug companies use to try to shape doctors' behavior.

Before I yield the floor, I ask unanimous consent to have the e-mails I referred to printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

From: Tachi Yamada

To: William D Claypool

CC: David M Stout, Jean-Pierre Garnier

Subject: Re: Avandia Renegade

Date: 06/25/1999 19:15:33 (GMT-05:00)

BILL: I spoke to both JP and David Stout today about this situation. I doubt that speaking to his chairman about him will do much good—in fact if he's as bad as he seems to be, his chairman probably already has doubts about him. In any case, I plan to speak to Fred Sparling, his former chairman (they are actively looking for his replacement) as soon as possible. I think that there are two courses of action. One is to sue him for knowingly defaming our product even after we have set him straight as to the facts—the other is to launch a well planned offensive on behalf of Avandia so that the listeners begin to understand at the very least that there are two sides to this story. I suspect that the latter approach would be preferred—it wouldn't look good for SB to be at war with a KOL.

TACHI.

William D Claypool on 25-Jun-1999 12:23

CLINICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

To: Tachi Yamada

Subject: Avandia Renegade

TACHI: At Avandia Day today, mention was made of John Buse from UNC who apparently has repeatedly and intentionally misrepresented Avandia data from the speaker's dais in various fora, most recent among which was the ADA. The sentiment of the SB group was to write him a firm letter that would warn him about doing this again (he will be speaking next at a major European congress in Stockholm in July) with the punishment being that we will complain up his academic line and to the CME granting bodies that accredit his activities. There was brief mention of a law suit but this was reserved for a later approach. The question comes up as to whether you think this is a sensible strategy, whether you know any of the principals at UNC (I don't), and whether we have other avenues to ensure his accuracy in the future (we don't really do too much work at UNC to make any threats)? I imagine that Paul Wadkins is too new in post for us to ask him to exert any influence on our behalf at his new institution.

Any thoughts?

Thanks.

BILL.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VA WAIT TIMES

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, I rise today, after two days of testimony by General Petraeus and Ambassador